

## FOREWORD

Although our End of Programme Report 2003-2008 (published in March 2009) included some brief discussion of the different issues in Wales and our inspection findings there, we felt it would be useful to provide a separate report outlining some of these in more detail.

The purpose of this report is to encourage further improvement by youth offending partnerships, both strategically and operationally. Proportionally, there have been more reinspections in Wales and we have found a number of governance issues in particular requiring attention there.

Each Chief Executive, who has overall responsibility for the partnership under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, together with key personnel in the police, probation, health, social services and education/training/employment have a considerable part to play in ensuring that both appropriate specialist and mainstream services are available to improve the well being of children and young people, as well as make them less likely to reoffend.

Overall, the provision in Wales was inconsistent - there are some examples of excellent practice, as well as poor practice. We are all in the business of improvement - the inspectorates, the Youth Justice Board and the providers. We all hope that this report will help to promote that improvement in Wales.



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## OVERVIEW

A number of factors make Welsh YOTs complex to manage. Criminal justice services remain within the UK Government remit. Performance is measured through the Youth Justice Board but local authority services, including children's services, are financed and held to account by the Welsh Assembly Government. The All Wales Youth Offending Strategy (2004 but currently subject to revision) was developed by the Welsh Assembly Government and the Youth Justice Board as a joint statement of intent in relation to youth justice in Wales. The principality has ten entitlements and seven core aims for children and young people aged 11-25 years. The Welsh language is an important consideration in delivering services to children and young people who speak and learn Welsh in schools and who are more likely than in the past to be first and second language Welsh speakers.

Furthermore, the majority of YOTs are small in terms of population but large in terms of geographical area. This can impact on how services are delivered.

### The inspection programme

YOT inspections in Wales were undertaken in cooperation and partnership with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales, Estyn (HM Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales), HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, the Healthcare Commission, the Healthcare Inspectorate Wales and HM Inspectorate of Prisons. A team of inspection staff from these different disciplines would visit a YOT for one or two weeks to examine, in detail, the practice and performance in that area.

The YOT inspection programme was undertaken in four phases between 2003 and 2008:

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
September 2003–July 2004	August 2004–June 2005	July 2005–February 2007	March 2007–December 2007
Conwy - Denbighshire Cardiff Neath Port Talbot	Merthyr Tydfil Wrexham	Newport Powys Flintshire Ceredigion Caerphilly & Blaenau Gwent Rhondda Cynon Taf	Bridgend Pembrokeshire Gwynedd & Ynys Môn Carmarthenshire Monmouthshire & Torfaen Vale of Glamorgan Swansea

Each phase was a development on the previous one, often reflecting the evolving work within the YOTs. Whilst some comparison can be made across time, other areas of inspection are not directly comparable.

Common threads throughout the five years have been the existence of a set of inspection criteria (against which the YOTs were judged), and a focus on looking at practice with children and young people through files and talking to case managers. The first phase focused on benchmarking performance. Prevention and court work were developed in more detail through phases 3 and 4 as we looked at specific case samples. The final phase looked in more detail at health, education, training and employment, *Safeguarding*, victims and restorative justice.

In the latter phases, evidence was collected across five areas:

- work in the courts
- work with children and young people in the community
- work with children and young people subject to custodial sentences
- victims and restorative justice
- management and leadership.

Evidence was collected through:

- an evidence in advance template (self-assessment)
- case file assessments (through file reading and an in-depth interview with the case manager), covering assessment and planning, interventions and outcomes
- a structured interview, asking staff views about management and leadership
- questionnaires, software and interviews with service users (children and young people, parents/carers and victims)
- individual and group interviews with staff and managers
- interviews with strategic managers on the YOT Management Board and in external statutory organisations.

This collection of evidence culminated in an individual YOT report detailing our judgements and findings and with recommendations for improvement. We emphasised the YOTs' key task of preventing offending, but within a holistic framework given the range of factors that can contribute to a child or young person offending. We paid particular attention to those relatively few children and young people who might be a *Risk of Harm to others*, and to the *Safeguarding* of those who might be vulnerable.

Copies of the report were sent to two Ministers – covering both the health and social services and social justice and local government. Local assembly members also received a copy.

In response to our recommendations, each YOT produced an improvement plan that was signed off by the lead inspector and handed over to the Youth Justice Board Head of Wales to monitor.

It was necessary to reinspect three YOTs where we had found the standard of work undertaken to be insufficient. Whilst the reinspections found considerable improvement, because of the low base from which they were moving on, for some YOTs there remained a significant amount to do.

## GLOSSARY

Asset	Assessment tool developed by the Youth Justice Board for those children and young people who have offended
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
DTO	Detention and training order
ETE	Employment, training and education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
ISSP	Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
Onset	Assessment tool developed by the Youth Justice Board for those children and young people who are likely to offend
PPO	Prolific and other priority offender
PSR	Pre-sentence report
YIP	Youth Inclusion Programme
YJB	Youth Justice Board
YOI	Young Offenders Institution
YOS/T/PS	Youth Offending Service/Team/Youth Offending Prevention Service

## WORK IN THE COURTS

Work in the courts was not specifically included in the scope of the inspection until phases 3 and 4.

In phase 3 we read a total of 113 pre-sentence reports (PSRs) that had been prepared for the courts. We found that 84% of the reports were based on an Asset assessment. In the vast majority of cases there was a clear proposal for sentence, and reports were free from discriminatory language and stereotypes. 89% of the PSRs contained information from all relevant sources.

In phase 4 we examined 161 cases where the child or young person had been through the court process and in 136 (84%) of cases a written PSR was prepared for the courts. As in phase 3, the YOTs scored higher in the practical elements of report preparation than they did in those elements that required staff to use their assessment skills. 96% had been prepared within the required timescales, 95% of children and young people and 89% of their parents/carers had been interviewed for the specific purpose of preparing the reports, and 80% were based on relevant evidence from Asset. Even so, only 65% were considered by inspectors to be balanced, verified and factually accurate.

### Individual Finding:

The YOT had produced a high standard of PSRs in accordance with the relevant national standards. All staff preparing reports had received written instructions with regard to their role and the YOT's expectations of the tasks to be performed. They had received appropriate training and were supported through the process of preparing PSRs. Quality assurance processes involved the scrutiny of all reports by the senior practitioner to make sure that standards were maintained. Efforts were made to ensure PSRs were appropriate and impartial and were free from jargon and discriminating language (*Flintshire YOT 2006*).

It was disappointing to find that only 57% of the PSRs included an analysis of the offence as distinct from a description. 45% did not differentiate between the likelihood of reoffending and *Risk of Harm to others*. Safeguarding children and young people should be a priority for YOTs, but practice was inconsistent. Although in the majority of cases (87%) the PSR authors

sought information from children's services to inform the reports, this and other relevant information about their health and accommodation needs were not always used to inform the assessment of children and young people's vulnerability, which was addressed in less than half of the reports. YOT staff were not using their assessment skills to identify and inform the courts of the potentially adverse impact that a custodial sentence was likely to have on the child or young person. We found that this information was not included in almost one-third of reports.

#### **Individual Findings:**

79% of court reports we inspected included an analysis of the offence as distinct from a description, 83% outlined the potentially adverse impact of custody and 94% made a clear proposal for sentence (*Carmarthenshire YOPS 2009*).

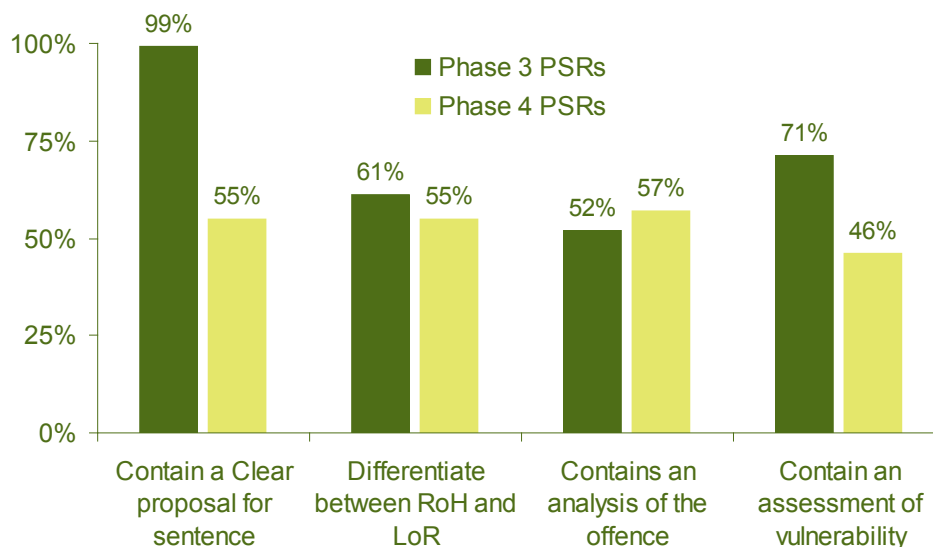
All PSRs were based on an up-to-date Asset assessment. The majority included an analysis of the offence, the child or young person's maturity and their ability to understand the seriousness and consequences of their offence. Their diversity needs were also addressed (*Monmouthshire & Torfaen YOT 2009*).

Some YOTs had adopted good quality assurance or gatekeeping processes that had ensured that their PSRs were of a higher standard than others without an equally rigorous process. However, the overall scores were well below what could be expected at this time of the YOTs' development. One of the most consistent and significant areas of PSR preparation that the majority of YOTs were failing to get right was the differentiation between *Risk of Harm to others*, likelihood of reoffending and the children and young people's vulnerability or risk of harm from others.

#### **Individual Finding:**

The YOT, through the senior practitioner, had a gatekeeping process in place for all court reports to ensure compliance with national standards. Efforts were made to make sure that PSRs were appropriate, factually correct, impartial and free from jargon and discriminating language (*Ceredigion YOT 2007*).

## Measures



Staff who prepared reports on prolific and other priority offender (PPO) children and young people appeared to be more aware of the issues regarding *Risk of Harm to others*, and likelihood of reoffending. Of the 28 PSRs prepared on PPOs, three-quarters addressed the seriousness of their offences and 86% contained an assessment of the likelihood of further offending. Disappointingly, more than a third did not contain a clear and proportionate proposal for sentencing.

Diversity was an area of developing practice for the YOTs and one that needed to become more central to their work. Staff training, skills development and practice guidance required a more strategic approach. Encouragingly, in phase 4 we found 79% of PSRs to be objective, impartial and free from discriminatory language and stereotype. But here again, staff had been reluctant to use their assessment skills to address the children and young people's diversity needs in their reports. These included needs such as, health, education, language, social skills, religion, race, ethnicity and rurality. Lack of access to resources are often contributory factors to offending yet only 66% of PSRs sufficiently addressed these issues.

### Strengths

- Most reports were based on Asset.
- Reports were prepared within the required timescales.
- Most children and young people and parents/carers were interviewed for the purpose of the report.
- Some effective gatekeeping or quality assurance processes to raise standards were taking place.

### Areas for Improvement

- Reports were not always balanced or factually correct.
- There was a lack of analysis of the offence(s).
- Poor differentiation between *Risk of Harm to others* and likelihood of reoffending was a feature of many reports.
- There was a lack of reference to important diversity issues or vulnerability assessments.

## PREVENTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM OFFENDING

Prevention work carried out by the YOTs became more formalised into the inspection process in phase 4. During the first three phases this area of work was examined through observation, on-site visits to projects and through interviews with managers and service delivery staff. Detailed examination of a small number of case files together with interviews with the key worker and any other person significantly involved in delivering the intervention was introduced in phase 4. This enabled the inspection team to collect qualitative and quantitative information that informed a more thorough inspection of the work undertaken and services offered.

Throughout the four phases of the YOT inspection programme we have seen an increase in the quality and range of interventions offered by the YOTs and their partners to children and young people who are likely to offend. Because this work was not seen by some YOTs as statutory and/or a priority for them, it was later in its development than other parts of the YOTs' work. The resources available continued to be dependent on external funding from partner agencies such as Community Safety Partnerships, Children and Young People's Partnerships and some departments in the local authorities, Local Health Boards, the National Assembly for Wales and additional funding from the Youth Justice Board through its prevention grants. A significant number of these funding streams were short term, which had left an air of uncertainty with regard to the life of these projects and instability for staff who were, in the main, on short-term contracts. Nevertheless, there were examples of innovative and effective engagement with children and young people who were likely to offend.

### Individual Finding:

The Youth Inclusion Programme (YIP) was the mainstay of the YOT prevention programme and provided constructive interventions for the children and young people identified as likely to offend. These interventions were linked to local schools, and targeted issues such as truancy and peer pressures. The YIP was able to offer a wide range of activities outside the education environment, using the school as a base within the local community. It was also able to access interventions available to the YOT, particularly the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme which, to date, some 30 children and young people had joined through the YIP (*Neath Port Talbot YOT 2004*).

Work by the YOTs in the first three phases was mainly targeted around Summer Splash Schemes and YIPs, with good links into a range of additional specialist vocational, educational and recreational programmes. Delivery of these programmes involved a range of partner agencies within the local authorities, the police, fire service and local and national voluntary agencies. Onset was starting to be rolled out to YOTs in phase 2, and some had started to engage with this assessment process. Monitoring and evaluation, the provision of services to a diverse range of children and young people and a lack of coordination between some YOTs and their partner agencies were seen as the main areas for improvement at this time.

### Individual Finding:

The 'prevention' agenda had been the most difficult area for the YOS to engage in actively, mainly because of staff shortages. There did not appear to be a formal referral or assessment process, and no direct work with children and young people at risk of offending was seen. The YOS's duty to prevent offending was primarily discharged through membership of a number of partnership groups responsible for delivering a range of services. The YIP was very active in Wrexham and attempted to complete formal assessments on a percentage of the targeted 50 children and young people with whom it worked. Consideration was being given to the development of a smaller YIP for children and young people in an area particularly affected by youth nuisance (*Wrexham YOS 2005*).

### Individual Findings:

The YOT involved itself in local crime prevention initiatives such as Crime of your Life and South Wales Fire Service Project, which was an arson initiative, and Stunt Acton 'We can be heroes', an antisocial behaviour initiative (*Caerphilly & Blaenau Gwent YOT 2006*).

The YOS had its own crime prevention strategy, but worked in partnership with other agencies to achieve its aims. The Youth Justice Plan for 2005/2006 noted that this approach had resulted in the review of the antisocial behaviour strategy and a grant was obtained from the Safer Communities Fund for two antisocial behaviour order workers who were placed in the YOS (*Newport YOS 2006*).

The in-depth examination of case files in phase 4 enabled a more thorough assessment of a YOT's contribution to prevention and early intervention. Although the vast majority of YOTs had developed good partnerships, some were still not contributing to the prevention agenda. By this stage of the inspection process Onset was more embedded into practice and some YOTs had started to develop clear referral criteria and processes. We found that, in 68% of cases, referrals were linked to the scheme's criteria. The Onset referral and screening form was used in 73% (54) of cases, and the referrals were verified through locally-agreed processes in 78% of all cases. On an impressive 90% of occasions we felt the decision to offer services was justified.

As with the preparation of PSRs, YOT staff engaged better with the practical areas of using Onset than with the areas that required the use of their assessment skills. 88% of assessments had been completed within the appropriate timescales and the vast majority had been informed by interviews with the children and young people and their parents/carers and contacts with relevant partner agencies. We were pleased to see that, in 89% of cases, information from parents/carers was reflected in the assessments, particularly with regard to the identification of positive, supportive and pro-social factors.

The planning and delivery of interventions was an area that needed further development. The purpose of intervening early into children and young people's lives is to prevent them from offending. Ideally, the most appropriate interventions will be delivered over a limited period of time, and with a clear exit strategy that assists children and young people to reduce their antisocial behaviour and to develop social skills and confidence so that they are able to function well in their local communities. Although some YOTs had started to develop better quality plans, we found that, in over a third of cases (25), there were no intervention plans and, where there were plans, they varied in both quality and content. In the majority of cases there was no exit strategy and Onset was not reviewed. We were, however, pleased to find that 73% of plans prepared contained interventions aimed at preventing offending behaviour and a similar number were sensitive to the children and young people's diversity needs.

### **Individual Findings:**

There was a wide range of interventions used to address issues such as antisocial behaviour, substance misuse, anger management and self-esteem, as well as family relationships. Good use was made of the modern apprentice mentoring scheme that provided mentoring as well as a range of activities (*Swansea YOS 2009*).

In the majority of cases we saw good quality intervention plans that addressed children and young people's offending behaviour and criminogenic needs. They were time limited and contained clear exit strategies. Interventions were aimed at introducing children and young people to positive interests outside the home, while others were aimed at helping them to develop life skills (*Monmouthshire & Torfaen YOT 2009*).

### **Risk of Harm to others:**

Assessing and managing this issue is a developing area of practice for the YOTs and YIPs. We found that, in 80% of cases, there was accurate screening of the indicators of *Risk of Harm to others*. Where accurate screening had led to the completion of a full Risk of Serious Harm assessment, the majority (89%) were of a sufficient standard but, unfortunately, 57% of the accurately screened cases did not lead to the completion of a full assessment at all. The impact of this failure to accurately and comprehensively assess the *Risk of Harm* that children and young people presented to others was that the majority of these cases were not appropriately managed. It was not surprising to find, therefore, that *Risk of Harm* was not regularly reviewed, even when there were significant changes in the children and young people's circumstances and behaviour, including further antisocial or offending behaviour.

### **Individual Finding:**

*Risk of Harm* screening, assessments and plans were carried out in all relevant cases and communicated to all staff involved. Overall, we found the quality of *Risk of Harm* assessments to be sufficient in 83% of cases (*Bridgend YOT 2008*).

## Health:

The prevention services usually had access to the health resources within the YOTs. Assessing and addressing children and young people's health needs varied between YOTs and was dependent on the resources available. The lack of a general health nurse within the YOTs or access to one within the community had resulted in a deficiency of assessments and services to address physical health needs. Only one YOT had access to physical health services through the school nursing service. However, all the YOTs in this phase of the inspection had access to a specialist with an emotional and mental health background and substance misuse staff. Two YOTs were also able to provide sexual health advice to children and young people. In one YOT the quality of work to promote children and young people's health needs was found to be either sufficient or excellent in all cases whilst in another YOT, the quality of work in 78% of cases reviewed was found to be insufficient.

### Individual Findings:

Six children and young people were identified through Onset as having emotional and mental health needs. Referrals to mainstream health services were required in five of these cases. All five were referred and received a service (*Monmouthshire & Torfaen YOT 2009*).

The health needs of a child or young person who was likely to offend were routinely screened by the YOPS health staff based in the team. These included a Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) nurse, general health worker, the substance misuse service and a youth worker who was family planning trained. We found evidence that YOPS staff accurately identified physical, mental health and substance misuse needs (*Carmarthenshire YOPS 2009*).

The best current practice in preventative health work offered a holistic assessment at the first point of engagement with children and young people that allowed the identification of the most visible health needs to be addressed. Well trained generic case managers either carried out this assessment or each child or young person was seen by a health practitioner during the early stages of YOT involvement in order that the health assessment formed an integral part of the overall Onset assessment.

A decision was made by YOT Managers in Wales to not use the specialist health assessment tools screening interview for adolescents and screening questionnaire interview for adolescents that had been provided by the Youth Justice Board. But, having made that decision, a number were not using any form of specific assessment tool and, without this type of early, targeted assessment, the health needs of significant numbers of children and young people were often missed. We found that the physical health needs of a third of those children and young people were not being assessed, and the impact of this was that their physical health needs were not addressed.

Although arrangements for responding to the emotional and mental health and substance misuse needs of children and young people in some YOTs were good, overall, we found that, of the 36 children and young people identified as having emotional and mental health needs, 25 had received a service. There was a general lack of adequate Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder services generally, and we were particularly concerned about the coordination of emotional and mental services for children and young people aged 16 and 17 who, it would seem, had fallen between children and adult services.

Responding to substance misuse needs was much better as the vast majority of children and young people who were identified as requiring help to address their substance misuse needs received an appropriate service.

**Individual Finding:**

CAMHS had strict eligibility and exclusion criteria that made it very difficult for many children and young people who might have benefited to access the services. Examples included a child or young person who had been referred for a service, but failed a single appointment. He was then removed from the list and had to be re-referred. Children and young people aged between 16 and 18 had to be referred to the adult service, which was far from ideal for those who were emotionally immature, as many of the YOS users were (*Swansea YOS 2009*).

### Safeguarding:

Assessing the joint work between the YOTs and their partners to protect and keep children and young people safe formed an integral part of the inspection process. We found that, in the majority of cases, YOTs were checking the social services database to see whether or not children and young people were already known to them and that there were varying forms of liaison and joint work between the two agencies. The quality of planned action was, however, disappointing. The behaviour of 18 children and young people had made them vulnerable and 30 were at risk of harm from others, including their parents/carers. A vulnerability action plan was prepared in six out of the relevant 39 cases and, although all the plans met the children and young people's assessed needs, the resulting action was clearly inadequate. Overall, we found that actions by the YOTs and their partners to safeguard children and young people likely to offend was effective in only 65% of cases.

#### Individual Findings:

We were confident that children and young people were being safeguarded consistently through the work of the YOT, but there was room for improvement. We found good quality supervision and support, and a willingness to learn, develop and improve practice. The issues of risk and vulnerability, when drawn to the YOT's attention, were addressed immediately by the YOT management and an action plan produced with responsibility and timescales specified (*Flintshire YOT 2006*).

In 100% of cases seen, if the child or young person was considered vulnerable to harm from self or others, action had been taken, and in 86% it was believed to have met identified needs (*Caerphilly & Blaenau Gwent YOT 2006*).

The behaviour of two of the children and young people was considered to have placed them at *Risk of Harm* from themselves, and four were considered to be at *Risk of Harm* from known adults. Referrals were made to children's services in relevant cases, but the action taken to reduce the risk and protect the children and young people was not considered to be appropriate in all cases (*Bridgend YOT 2008*).

## Employment, Training and Education:

Arrangements for responding to the employment, training and education (ETE) needs of children and young people involved with the prevention services within the YOTs varied between YOTs and local authorities. There were examples of innovative partnerships with colleges, schools, the youth service and voluntary agencies that enabled the provision of services that met the diverse needs of some children and young people in contact with the YOT.

### Individual Findings:

The YOT had developed good links with the 14-19 Learning Network, from which it had been successful in attracting funding for a literacy and numeracy tutor post. The independent report, '*Entitled to Learn*', commissioned by the YOT, which sought children and young people's views about the barriers to learning they faced, was said to be instrumental in achieving this funding (*Bridgend YOT 2008*).

The Community Safety Partnership had been involved in funding a skills centre attached to a local comprehensive school to develop children and young people's skills to make them more employable. For example, a tractor had been purchased and a workshop equipped (*Pembrokeshire YOT 2008*).

There had been a recent expansion of the pathways by the Education Other Than At School programme and a sharp increase in funding. Every child or young person on these pathways was offered 25 hours contact time per week. Between 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 there had been a 20% increase in the number of children and young people completing the 25-hour programme. Even when children and young people chose not to attend the whole package, they could still gain a range of qualifications, including GCSEs. The service was well aware of which children and young people were supervised by the YOS and could account for each one's attendance and attainment. This was an unusually positive feature. There was good attainment by these children and young people at key stage four (*Swansea YOS 2009*).

The local authority, as a whole, had a prevention agenda and the local education authority was particularly proactive. It had appointed 13 community-focused school cluster workers and the YOS had pooled funding with three schools in order to provide joint working on the school sites to help implement the Youth Inclusion Support Panel and support targeted children and young people aged eight-13 years old (*Rhondda Cynon Taf 2007*).

Despite the good practice examples outlined, some YOTs were still not undertaking a comprehensive and good quality assessment of children and young people's learning and development needs. YOT staff did not always use the Onset assessment and too often relied on information from the children and young people or their parents/carers without reference to their schools. This had resulted in the need not being identified and, as a consequence, some children and young people did not receive support to access appropriate services. Often, where assessments had been carried out and children and young people referred, services were not matched to their needs and the level of education offered was far below the required 25 hours per week. Of the 31 children and young people identified as having statutory education needs, only 20 had been appropriately placed. The needs of children and young people who were subject to a special educational needs statement or required the specialist intervention of education psychologists were often ignored, and there was little evidence of contacts with a special education needs coordinator or the educational psychologist services. Action to readmit children and young people who had been excluded from mainstream schools was unsuccessful in almost half of the relevant cases.

We do perceive some improvement in those YOTs that have been reinspected more recently.

## Strengths

- Most Onset assessments were completed within appropriate timescales and were informed by information from the children and young people and their parents/carers.
- The majority of cases were checked against the social services database.
- When completed, most *Risk of Harm* assessments were of a sufficient standard.
- Most of the intervention plans that had been prepared, contained interventions aimed at preventing offending and were sensitive to the children and young people's diversity needs.
- The vast majority of children and young people who needed help with their substance misuse received an appropriate service.
- Innovative partnerships with colleges, schools, the youth service and voluntary agencies ensured that some children and young people in contact with the YOT were placed in appropriate education, training and employment provisions.

## Areas for Improvement

- Despite screening indicating a need for a Risk of Serious Harm assessment, these were not completed in more than half of the relevant cases.
- Physical health needs were not assessed in a third of cases.
- In a third of cases there were no intervention plans, and rarely were there reviews of those that had been prepared.
- Poor assessment of ETE needs had resulted in a lack of identification of these needs and many children and young people were not receiving their educational entitlement.
- There were inadequate CAMHS, particularly for 16 and 17 year olds.
- Despite assessments identifying *Safeguarding* needs, plans were rarely put in place to manage vulnerability.
- Few cases had an exit strategy.

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO OFFEND

The quality of engagement with children and young people who had offended varied across the YOTs and, although there was a range of resources available in some areas, these were not always used to their best effect. Over the four phases of YOT inspections we reviewed 620 cases of children and young people who were either subject to final warnings or had been sentenced by the courts. An Asset assessment had been completed in the vast majority of cases. Undoubtedly, the quality of assessments had some bearing on the matching of interventions to the individual. The practical elements of using the Asset assessment were followed in the majority of cases, particularly with regard to timeliness and the involvement of children and young people and their parents/carers. We found that there was a steady decrease in the number of likelihood of reoffending assessments that were either sufficient or excellent. It was heartening to see that, although not yet good enough overall, the number of *Risk of Harm to others* assessments completed had increased during the phases but the quality of these assessments lacked focus and detail.

Finding the most appropriate intervention that matched the individual needs of the child or young person who had offended was often a challenge. We found that practice varied not only between YOTs but also between individuals within teams. There is no doubt that the quality of assessments and sentence planning had a direct impact on service delivery. Some YOTs had a range of good quality interventions whilst others, particularly in the more rural or larger geographical areas, struggled to either find accommodation to deliver services themselves or partnership agencies with whom to share this responsibility. In a considerable number of cases home visits were inappropriately used to make up for this lack of resource and this had impacted on the quality of engagement with children and young people.

Where partners were engaged in sharing or helping YOTs to find suitable accommodation, this had enabled the YOT to offer a greater range of services to meet assessed needs.

The quality of work with children and young people subject to final warnings had fluctuated throughout the four phases of the inspection, with a reduction in our random case sample of the number of children and young people receiving an intervention following the delivery of the

final warning from 92% in phase 1, to 71% in phase 4. There were similar fluctuations with referral orders where the preparation of reports for the youth offender panel meetings and the content of contracts were the main consistent positive factors. There was evidence of innovative and good quality interventions with children and young people subject to referral orders throughout each phase of the inspection process. Overall, where resources existed and panel members were well engaged, imaginative and appropriate contracts had been agreed and delivered.

**Individual Finding:**

The Youth Justice Centre accommodated a range of programmes including, an ISSP, resettlement and aftercare provision and individual and group work activities. The centre was a well equipped and attractive venue close to public transport and well placed opposite the local authority work-based learning company. There was a soft area, a kitchen, a very well resourced information technology room and two fully equipped workshops, one for carpentry and one for mechanics and maintenance (*Swansea YOS 2009*).

Between the first and last phases, YOTs had had time to become more established. Although training and practice guides had been developed and made available to them, we expected that core practice would be better embedded. We were concerned that the principles of effective practice were not consistently applied even at phase 4 of the inspections. Engagement with children and young people whose offending behaviour was more entrenched was concerning. One of the primary aims of 'Speeding up Youth Justice' was to enable the early engagement of children and young people while the offence they had committed was still quite fresh in their minds, in order that interventions were meaningful to them and their offending behaviour. We found that the YOTs' first contact with some 25% to 30% of children and young people did not take place within the required timescale, and the quality of that first engagement was assessed to be sufficient in 58% of cases. It was not surprising to find that the compliance rate was in the region of 70%, and one-third had been convicted of a further offence during the period they were supervised by the YOTs.

The introduction of the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme (ISSP) has added value to the YOTs' engagement with children and young people at the higher end of the offending spectrum and, in the main, the consortia approach appears to have worked well. The majority of YOTs had delivered some good quality interventions to the children and young people they supervised and had mainly received scores of either adequate or good for this area of their work.

### **Individual Findings:**

We were impressed by the culture of rigorous enforcement, the clarity of the engagement message conveyed to the children and young people, and the level of positivity within the ISSP (*Cardiff YOT 2004*).

The majority of children and young people supervised by the YOT complied with the conditions of their orders/licences (*Powys YOT 2006*).

The YOT had a good range of interventions for children and young people including Teen Talk, a girls' group and a race initiative project. Specialist staff and case managers worked very effectively together (*Rhondda Cynon Taf YOT 2007*).

Overall, we saw some very good work with children and young people, particularly with regard to anger management, offending behaviour, attitude towards victims and misuse of drugs and alcohol (*Newport YOS 2006*).

There was a range of interventions, including individual interventions using recognised work programmes for victim awareness and anger management. The Youth Justice Centre accommodated and contributed to a range of programmes and YOS services, including ISSPs and resettlement and aftercare provision and individual and group work activities. A number of children and young people were referred to Dojo, a contracted provider that delivered programmes on self-esteem, anger management and social skills through exercise-based activities, including martial arts (*Swansea YOS 2009*).

## Health:

Health and well being are seen as one of the primary factors contributing to offending behaviour in children and young people.

*‘The majority of children and young people who have offended, or are at risk of offending, have more health needs than those who have not offended’  
(Actions Speak Louder 2009).*

Although in some areas the health contribution to YOTs had been slower than some others, throughout the inspection process there had been a steady increase in health provisions, with the result that the vast majority of YOTs either had seconded health professionals or access to health resources on a part-time basis. The appropriateness of, and accessibility to, these health professionals often depended on availability. An area of concern was the lack of clarity surrounding mental health provisions for children and young people post-16 who fell between CAMHS responsibility and those of the adult services.

Problems experienced by partners within their own agencies often impacted on their ability to honour any partnership arrangements with their local YOT. This was apparent in Powys, where other factors, including the placement by other authorities of Looked After Children with complex needs in their area, had had an additional impact on already stretched resources. This situation had impacted in two ways on the YOS. The first was that there was no resource for the children and young people they already supervised and the second was that the children and young people placed in their area with complex health needs were either already offending or were likely to offend and would therefore add to those needing a health service.

Other examples of an inadequate response to health arrangements included an area where an adult mental health specialist without adequate access to CAMHS was seconded to the YOS, only part-time resources were provided or there was a lack of access to a general or sexual health nurse. These examples cannot simply be excused as recruitment problems but highlight poor attitudes to the importance of these needs for children and young people who offend.

Although there was a significant way to go before health provisions within YOTs were both good enough and consistent enough, we did find a number of positive examples of partnership approaches to health provisions within YOTs:

#### **Individual Findings:**

The YOT had a health panel that met weekly to allocate new cases and monitor existing cases. The panel was normally chaired by the operations manager responsible for prevention and included the substance misuse worker and specialist nurse adviser. Other agencies were also invited, when necessary, to contribute to individual cases and discuss possible service developments (*Flintshire YOT 2006*).

The Youth Justice Service had agreed a new screening pathway with CAMHS. Referrals were directed through the specialist CAMHS nurse for consideration by the CAMHS team, which undertook mental health assessments on an individual child or young person, and consultative services for the specialist nurse and other staff members as appropriate (*Gwynedd & Ynys Môn YJS 2008*).

There was a strong focus on emotional and mental health issues as well as drugs and alcohol misuse, all of which were identified as a high area of need through the case file reading analysis. All new cases were referred to the health visitor and substance misuse officer for assessment. Children and young people with physical health needs were supported by the YOT staff to register with a general practitioner and access a range of services, including dentist, optician and sexual health services (*Merthyr Tydfil YOT 2005*).

### Individual Findings:

YOT staff demonstrated a sound understanding of the importance of health promotion, as shown by some good examples of proactive work ensuring that physical health needs were met. There was a dedicated health worker who was a clinical nurse specialist and a substance misuse worker from Drugaid, both full-time in the YOT (*Caerphilly & Blaenau Gwent YOT 2006*).

43% of children and young people in the sample were identified as having emotional and mental health needs, whilst a further 68% were misusing substances. Referrals for specialist assessments were made both within and external to the YOT in all cases and appropriate interventions were delivered (*Bridgend YOT 2008*).

The YOT health worker, drug and police workers had developed a child or young person's arrest referral scheme in conjunction with the local police division. Any child or young person arrested and taken into custody would be offered a referral to the scheme if they were thought to be misusing drugs or alcohol. The scheme offered a confidential substance misuse service to all children and young people and their parents/carers (*Neath Port Talbot YOT 2004*).

Physical health needs were always less frequently identified than emotional and mental health or substance misuse needs. The lack of adequate resources even within YOTs that had seconded staff or access to health professionals had impacted on referrals. Throughout all four phases of the inspection almost half of the children and young people who had been assessed as needing health services were referred and, of those referred, up to a third did not always receive a service. It was not surprising that in some cases children and young people's health continued to deteriorate.

## Safeguarding:

Concern about children and young people's welfare has prompted a number of reports about how agencies work together to safeguard children and young people. Nevertheless, this is an area in which YOTs and their partners continue to struggle. It is important to stress that the YOTs' ability to safeguard children and young people is not a sole agency responsibility (for details see *Safeguarding Children: Working Together Under the Children's Act 2004, Welsh Assembly Government 2006*) but one that should be shared with all their partners, especially the statutory partners. Too often, YOTs report their frustration with these partners, particularly health and social services, who do not respond to their requests for information and/or assistance. In this part of the YOTs' work, we often found that the **Areas for Improvement** outweighed **Strengths**. Some YOTs had demonstrated some areas of good practice, but issues such as checking whether or not children and young people were known to social services, the use of bed and breakfast and other unsuitable accommodation and the lack of response from or involvement by social services remained as significant issues.

### Individual Finding:

Relationships with social services were inconsistent depending on individuals. YOT staff reported that social services did not always see children and young persons referred by the YOT as being a priority need, and Blaenau Gwent senior management acknowledged that the YOT had not been a key area of work due to their own difficulties (*Caerphilly & Blaenau Gwent YOT 2006*).

Some of the main *Safeguarding* issues faced by children and young people supervised by the YOTs included:

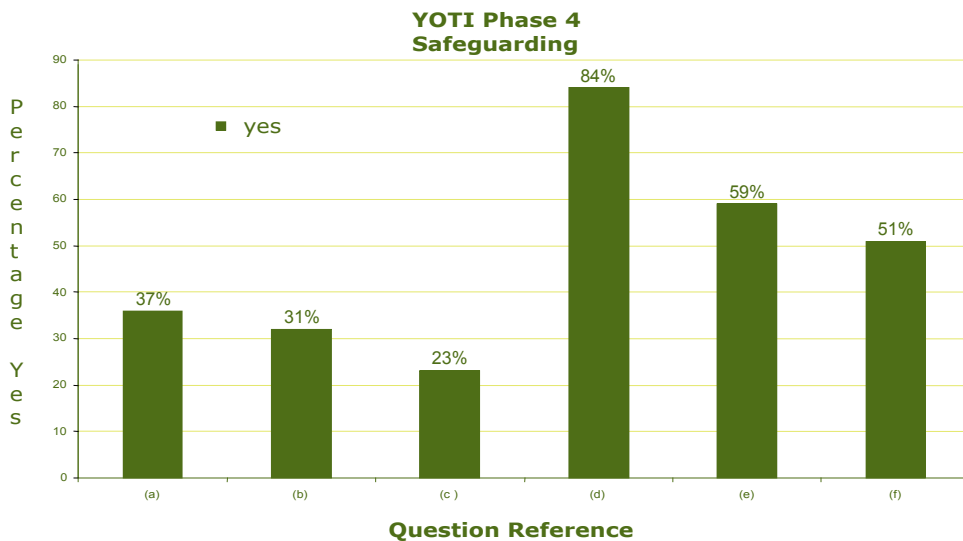
- *Risk of Harm* to themselves due to their own behaviour e.g. substance misuse and other risky behaviour such as offending
- *Risk of Harm* from others, including their parents/carers or other known adults
- sexual behaviour
- inadequate accommodation.

Throughout the four phases of the inspection programme we found that there was a consistently high percentage of children and young people who fell into one or more of the above categories. The action taken to protect these children and young people was not appropriate to their need in almost half of the cases in three out of the four phases. Only in phase 3 was it considered that action had been taken in 90% of cases and we considered this to be appropriate in 83% of cases.

### Vulnerability by Phase



Even by phase 4, practice had not sufficiently developed to an acceptable standard.



The chart above shows, from left to right:

- (a) the number of children and young people who were considered to be a risk to themselves
- (b) the number of children and young people who were at *Risk of Harm* from others
- (c) where a vulnerability management plan had been developed to reduce the identified risks
- (d) whether the content of the plan met the assessed need
- (e) the number of relevant cases referred to social services
- (f) whether appropriate action was taken to address the children and young people's *Safeguarding* needs.

We found that, too often, YOTs failed to see *Safeguarding* children and young people as an area of work that required concrete thinking and planning. In the cases where they had developed vulnerability management plans, these were often of a good quality but this was not always followed through with a referral to social services. Some YOTs had reported that a referral to social services did not always meet with a positive response as the thresholds were high or they failed to respond. Over time, the lack of action resulted in fewer cases being referred and, hence, true need was not then assessed.

We believe that, in addition to the issues raised by YOT staff, a further contributory factor was that there was a lack of understanding of the relevant roles between staff in both agencies.

#### **Individual Findings:**

The case file sample showed that appropriate action had been taken if a child or young person had been considered vulnerable from themselves or others in 86% of cases (*Flintshire YOT 2006*).

The YOS's risk-led approach assessed and targeted vulnerability. In all the cases examined, appropriate action had been taken to address the child or young person's vulnerability (*Rhondda Cynon Taf YOS 2007*).

We saw evidence that, in more than a third of the cases examined, the child or young person was, or had been in the past, a risk to themselves, mostly due to drug misuse. Half the children and young people were, or had been in the past, at risk from others. However, vulnerability plans were only present in just over a third of the relevant cases. Sometimes the issues were addressed, but then not fully written up as part of the vulnerability management plan. Some accounts did appear on the contact log, but this was a disparate approach and missed the point of managing vulnerability as part of an active plan (*Swansea YOS 2009*).

Safeguarding children and young people was one of the strengths of the YOT and we found that the overall quality of work to help children and young people to stay safe was sufficient in 98% of cases. In most cases the children and young people's social care status had been checked and recorded and appropriate referrals made to children's services (*Bridgend YOT 2008*).

Children and young people's accommodation needs are worthy of specific mention as this is an area where the YOTs and local authorities responsibilities as corporate parents have not always been appropriately exercised. The YJB has produced guidance for YOTs with regard to their roles and responsibilities for ensuring that children and young people live in suitable accommodation. *'Suitable, Sustainable, Supported: A strategy to ensure provision of accommodation for children and young people who offend'* (YJB 2006). The YJB encourages YOTs to work with partnership agencies to reduce the incidence of homeless children and young people, through the development of accommodation strategies that include their representation on local strategic housing bodies and that local authority housing departments should become members of YOT Management Boards. The Welsh Assembly Government has also legislated to restrict the use of unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation for vulnerable homeless people. *'The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (Wales) Order 2006'*, which was approved by the National Assembly for Wales on 7 March 2006. We have continued to find, however, that children and young people were placed in bed and breakfast accommodation. In our view, this is unsuitable because there is rarely any influence or control over who else resides there.

**Individual Finding:**

There was a shortage of suitable accommodation for homeless children and young people post-16 in both local authority areas and, as a consequence, some were placed inappropriately in bed and breakfast accommodation (*Monmouthshire & Torfaen YOT 2009*).

## **Education, training and employment for children and young people who have offended:**

Education, training and employment had been one of the key priority areas for the YJB as school exclusion and refusal is seen as one of the main factors linked to offending behaviour for children and young people. In 2004 the YJB had set as one of its main priorities a target that 90% of children and young people in the youth justice system should be in suitable ETE, with those of school age receiving 25 hours per week education. This target has remained in place but the majority of YOTs have struggled to attain it. Resourcing this area of practice by local education authorities has been variable, with some YOTs enjoying good secondment and partnership arrangements, whilst others were not seen as a priority. Some YOTs have been able to develop significant partnerships with their local authorities, schools, community safety partnerships, local providers and community groups. These partnerships do not always meet children and young people's needs, both in terms of the number of hours provided and the quality of service. This may, in part, be due to the lack of adequate assessment of children and young people's needs. We have found practice to be quite varied, even in YOTs where good resources were available.

YOT staff did not always consult with education providers during the initial or subsequent assessment stages but relied on the self-reports of children and young people. As a consequence, they did not have a true picture of the child or young person's ETE needs. Even though the YJB had developed a number of guides for YOTs aimed at helping them to develop this area of practice with children and young people, there appears to have been little or no significant change in the way in which YOTs and their partners assessed and provided for the ETE needs of children and young people in the youth justice system.

From phase 2 of the inspections (2005) we started to collect separate information with regard to education provision within YOTs. The two YOTs inspected in this phase were at different stages of progression in their education provision. One had previously been part of a cross authority team and was in the early stage of its development as a separate team, whilst the other was more established. Both had education staff seconded

into the teams and one had additional support through the secondment of an employment and training officer. Both YOTs enjoyed good relationships with their education departments, local schools and Careers Wales.

Overall, we found that 74% of children and young people had experienced difficulty with their education and training and 72% had been successfully re-engaged.

**Individual Finding:**

Both the education welfare officer and employment and training officer had developed good liaison arrangements with Ashfield YOI and Hillside Secure Unit in relation to coursework from schools and preparation for examinations (*Merthyr Tydfil YOT 2005*).

In phase 3, 65% (87) of children and young people were experiencing difficulty with their schooling, which ranged from bullying to permanent exclusions, while 39% of those post-16 were not in ETE. In less than three-quarters of cases the action taken to address the ETE needs of both groups of children and young people was considered to be appropriate to their needs.

Almost a third of children and young people of statutory school age in phase 4 needed help with their schooling, while over half of post-16 year olds needed help with ETE. Although a significant number of children and young people had not received a service that addressed these needs, post-16 year olds had received a much better service than those of school age. With regard to children and young people who had special educational needs, these were not often addressed. Fourteen children and young people had required a specialist learning difficulty and disability assessment, and only two had had one whilst twelve had a statement of educational needs and contact had been made with the school's special education needs coordinator or an educational psychologist in nine of those cases.

### **Individual Findings:**

There was a productive relationship between the education welfare officer and a Careers Wales worker. They worked particularly well together to help children and young people post-16 to access places in Youth Gateway, work-based learning and further education. Appropriate referrals for specialist assessment had been made in over 70% of the cases, and an intervention to promote learning made in 80% of the cases inspected (*Vale of Glamorgan YOS 2008*).

Where a child or young person had been formally permanently excluded, or had extended sanctioned absence from the mainstream school, the YOPS had taken action to reintegrate the pupil into full-time education in 71% of the relevant cases (*Carmarthenshire YOPS 2009*).

### ***Risk of Harm to others***

Although the numbers of children and young people who present a high *Risk of Harm to others* is significantly lower than in the adult population, the impact of their offending behaviour can be equally devastating. The assessment and management of *Risk of Harm to others* has continued to be a developing area of practice for YOTs. Some have produced practice guides for staff and have various structures for sharing and managing practice, whilst others have struggled to understand the issues concerned, particularly in the management of this risk.

In 2005 the YJB issued guidance to YOTs and training was later developed. Managers and staff from each YOT were trained and were expected to cascade this to staff within their own teams. Unfortunately, this does not appear to have had the desired impact of improving practice.

We have consistently found that, even where the screening indicated that it was necessary, YOT staff have not always completed a full Risk of Serious Harm assessment where one was needed, and those completed were not of a good enough quality. Staff often failed to draw on all relevant and available information and reviews did not take place on a regular basis and, in particular, following a significant event. Managers were not always appropriately involved in the assessment and management of these cases.

### Individual Findings:

A full *Risk of Harm* assessment was not completed in a significant number of relevant files and some caseworkers appeared uncertain about the process. This issue needed to be addressed through training. A high percentage of files identified as *Risk of Harm* had been annotated by a manager, and it was apparent from discussions with staff that the majority of cases were subject to management oversight (*Neath Port Talbot YOT 2004*).

Although there had been an increase in the number of *Risk of Harm to others* assessments completed for those requiring it, the quality and appropriateness of the interventions delivered continue to be a significant area for improvement.

Referring children and young people to, and working with, the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) had been an issue for YOTs throughout the period, with them being unclear initially of their role and how this may impact on their practice.

### Individual Findings:

There was a close fit between interventions planned and assessed *Risk of Harm to others* in 70% of cases which was followed up with appropriate interventions in 75% (*Conwy-Denbighshire YOT 2004*).

We found that the Risk of Serious Harm to others was accurately assessed in 93% of cases and the Risk of Serious Harm classification appeared to be correct in the six relevant cases inspected. The Risk of Serious Harm to others assessment had been completed to a sufficient standard and covered victim issues thoroughly in five of those cases (*Carmarthenshire YOPS 2009*).

## Strengths

- In the vast majority of cases an Asset assessment was completed within the required timescales.
- There was a steady increase in the completion of *Risk of Harm to others* assessments.
- Innovative and good quality interventions were available to children and young people who were subject to referral orders.
- There was positive engagement of children and young people on ISSPs.

## Areas for improvement

- The quality of assessments lacked focus and detail.
- More than a quarter of children and young people were not seen by YOT staff within the required timescales, and almost a third had been convicted of a further offence.
- There was a lack of suitable premises for YOT staff to work with the children and young people they supervised.
- Physical health needs were less frequently identified than emotional and mental health or substance misuse needs.
- Almost half of the children and young people requiring health services were referred, and up to a third of those referred did not always receive a service.
- Action taken to safeguard children and young people required further attention from the YOTs and partner agencies.
- Unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation was used to accommodate children and young people.
- Children and young people's education, training and employment needs were not being consistently addressed. Those requiring specialist assessments and with special educational needs were particularly disadvantaged.
- Improvements were required in screening, assessing and managing of *Risk of Harm to others*.

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SUBJECT TO CUSTODIAL SENTENCES

We were impressed by the quality of services that YOT staff provided to children and young people during their custodial sentences. Because the majority of them were placed in establishments in England, YOT staff had put in extra effort to maintain a good level of service. They attended the majority of training plan and review meetings and would often take parents/carers to see their children. YOT staff had also made efforts to include and invite other specialists to attend these meetings in order to ensure that the children and young people maintained appropriate links with services such as education, health and social services. The issues YOTs experienced in involving some of these services in the community was replicated for those serving custodial sentences both during the periods in custody and following release into the community. Where other partners did become involved, children and young people benefited enormously.

### Individual Findings:

The resettlement work with children and young people serving Detention and Training Orders was commendable. A specialist worker was responsible for all this work from sentence through to the end of the order. The worker attended all initial training plan and review meetings, often taking parents/carers along to these meetings and was observed to play a very active part. They also made regular visits to see the children and young people between reviews. Work started with the children and young people in custody and was followed up post-release in all cases (*Conwy-Denbighshire YOT 2004*).

Overall, the quality and frequency of core practice with regard to assessment, planning and delivery of interventions to children and young people who had served custodial sentences upon their release into the community, and the assessment and management of *Risk of Harm to others* was similar to that which was provided for children and young people subject to community orders. In addition, we were pleased to see that essential areas of practice, such as ensuring that an up-to-date Asset, vulnerability and *Risk of Harm to others* assessments were sent to the secure establishment within the required timescale in the majority of cases.

In the earlier phases this was done through the YJB's 'Yellow Envelope', which was given to the driver of the vehicle transferring the children and young people from court to the secure establishment and more recently through the electronic transfer system.

### **Individual Findings:**

For Looked After Children, the YOS consulted with the children and family services team during supervision in all cases, attended reviews and took action when they were considered vulnerable. This information was also included in the initial assessment (*Newport YOS 2006*).

Relationships with the more distant unit of HM Young Offenders' Institution (YOI) Ashfield were less flexible, and contact with children and young people was more difficult. However, there was evidence that case managers and senior managers were persistent in their attempts to improve matters. There were particular tensions with HMYOI Eastwood Park over arrangements to visit (*Swansea YOS 2009*).

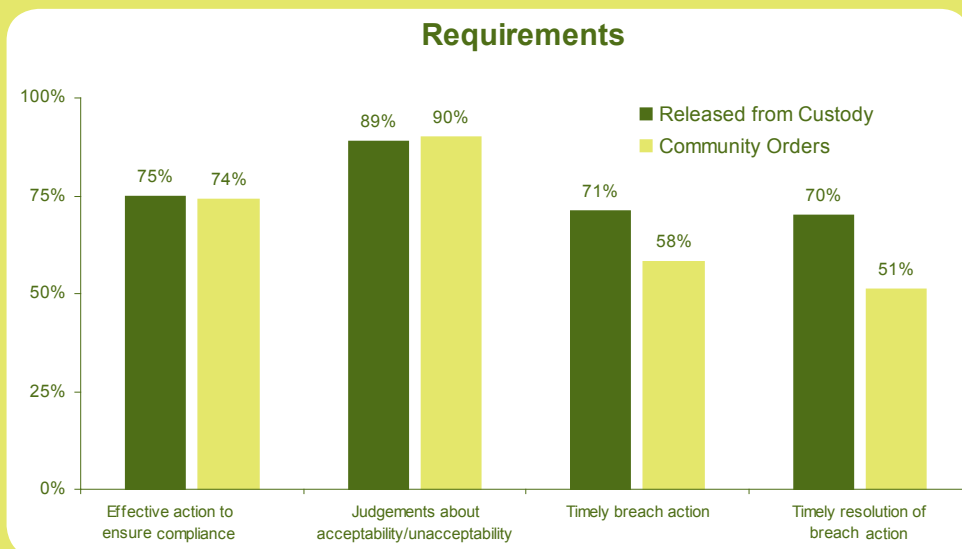
A dedicated DTO officer had been in post since 2003 and had negotiated a key tally with HMYOI Ashfield. This enabled the officer to have quick and ready access to children and young people made subject to custodial sentences. The worker had completed several aspects of HM Prison Service training and was able to engage effectively with HMYOI Ashfield staff on joint YOS/prison service requirements.

The officer was in a good position to support effective engagement by the parents/carers of the children and young people subject to custodial sentences. This post ensured that the YOS and HMYOI Ashfield had the communication arrangements to underpin effective interventions with children and young people. The YOS had a plan to host shadowing of Rhondda Cynon Taf YOS staff by YOI case managers to further consolidate the working relationships between the two organisations and to assist with raising YOI staff's awareness of community issues (*Rhondda Cynon Taf 2007*).

Children and young people considered to present a high *Risk of Harm* to the community were subject to Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and a protection plan was formulated (*Powys YOT 2006*).

For children and young people of school age returning to Ceredigion from the secure estate, Careers Wales and West provided the required support to a good standard. The children and young people met with a careers adviser before discharge, and information was transferred effectively from Connexions in England to help meet their needs (*Ceredigion YOT 2007*).

Although each community order and the community element of a custodial sentence had their own required level of supervision (in terms of the number of appointments they needed to keep with the YOT), all children and young people were treated similarly with regard to compliance and the decision to accept or reject the reason/excuse for failing to keep an appointment. However, YOT staff were slower in taking breach action for those on community orders.



## Strengths

- YOT staff regularly attended training plan and review meetings at secure establishments.
- Parents/carers were encouraged and assisted to attend training plan and review meetings.
- Appropriate assessments and documentation were sent to the secure establishments within the required timescales.
- Timely and effective action to ensure compliance and/or to return children and young people to court for breaching their orders was taken in most cases.

## Areas for improvement

- Partner agencies such as health, education and social services did not always provide the services needed by children and young people who had served custodial sentences.
- Practice in the assessment and management of *Risk of Harm to others* was inconsistent.

## THE WELSH LANGUAGE

The provision of services in the medium of Welsh has been a significant area that required development for many YOTs. We found that this element of the service was rarely discussed at Management Board level and was given low priority in the YOTs' annual Youth Justice Plans. As a consequence, planning for the provision of a bilingual service was weak in all YOTs, including those with a high percentage of Welsh speakers in their area. In this context the staff teams did not consistently reflect the needs of the local population and service users' rights to use their language of choice. With children and young people being more likely than in the past to be first and second Welsh language speakers, some YOTs needed to work hard to ensure that all elements of their work could provide this facility. Our experience of providing Welsh-speaking inspection staff has been interesting in that staff and children and young people have opted to be interviewed in Welsh. Our view is that all YOT services should be provided on a dual language basis, although we recognise that achieving this may take a while.

### Individual Findings:

Wrexham was a border town and the number of people over the age of three who spoke Welsh was lower than the Welsh average. However, more than 17% of the population were Welsh speaking. The business language of the authority was English but they had a Welsh language policy. The YOS had some Welsh-speaking staff but could, we judged, have used these staff more proactively to facilitate use of the Welsh language. Leaflets were bilingual, but correspondence was only in English, and the Welsh-speaking children and young people seen said that they had been given no choice as to which language they wished used for their interventions (*Wrexham YOS 2005*).

Reflecting the diversity needs of the area, the Management Board had operated in accordance with the Welsh Language Act 1993 through the Welsh language schemes of the two county councils. The Board operated through the medium of the Welsh language with simultaneous translation facilities and bilingual agendas and minutes of its meetings (*Gwynedd & Ynys Môn YJS*).

Although YOT administrative staff answered the telephone bilingually, they did not speak Welsh and were not, therefore, in a position to offer an equal service should a Welsh-speaking member of the public contact the YOT (*Monmouthshire & Torfaen YOT 2009*).

Victims were provided with a bilingual information leaflet and offered services in their language of choice since the YOPS employed a number of fluent Welsh-speaking staff (*Carmarthenshire YOPS 2009*).

## DIVERSITY

### Children and young people

The provision of services to meet the individual and diverse needs of the children and young people supervised by YOTs was a challenging area of practice. Issues linked to offending and diversity needs were often, but not always, the same. As some YOTs struggled to identify and respond to these needs, they equally had difficulty in identifying and responding to diversity needs. Crucially, staff and managers were often not trained in diversity practice and resources were not always available to meet the individual needs of the children and young people. There had been varying degrees of success in this area of YOT practice.

We found that some YOTs had recognised and addressed diversity issues, but did not then record this as an explicit issue as part of their documentation, in particular their planning processes.

#### Individual Findings:

Pembrokeshire had a significant traveller community that was settled in the area and had links going back several generations. Education and youth services provided two specialist education units for the children and young people, with dedicated workers, and there was a specific youth forum for this cultural group. The YOT had forged good links with these services. As part of the preventative programme, the youth worker within the YOT had developed a garden project at a primary school in an area where traveller children attended mainstream school. These children were also encouraged to attend Splish/Splash activities in school holidays (*Pembrokeshire YOT 2009*).

Diversity issues, potentially discriminatory/disadvantaging factors and other individual needs had been actively assessed, and imaginative arrangements had been made to minimise their impact in all cases. YOS staff were skilled at engaging children and young people with learning difficulties, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and those on the autism spectrum and, where appropriate, took advice from the children's learning disability team. Gender issues were addressed. Interpreters and translators were used where appropriate. Staff were sensitive to cultural and religious needs (*Swansea YOS 2009*).

The YOS had succeeded in attracting a diverse workforce in terms of gender and ethnicity through positive recruitment strategies, but more needed to be done in terms of staff management and retention. Plans to establish a support group for black and other minority ethnic groups had not been implemented, and staff within the YOS reported that they had found their own support mechanisms through a variety of outside organisations (*Wrexham YOS 2005*).

A young person aged 15 from a travelling family was unable to read and write. He was referred to the referral panel who arranged one-to-one sessions with a tutor based at the YOT, as part of his programme. This young person made excellent progress, his self-esteem received a big boost and he completed the programme successfully (*Merthyr Tydfil YOT 2005*).

## MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

We have seen a wide variation in the way in which YOTs have been constituted, funded and managed. Even allowing for financial and staffing difficulties within partner agencies, some YOTs were poorly managed and supported. Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, local authority Chief Executive Officers have overall responsibility for the YOT. Either their interest or direct involvement in the YOT Management Board is key to achieving quality services, both directly for the YOT and in enabling partners to contribute effectively. It was apparent that some partners were not fully aware of their responsibilities. They did not view YOT Management Board meetings as a priority, and their funding and staffing responsibilities were seen as yet another call on what they saw as limited resources. The impact for many YOTs was that Management Boards were either attended by people of insufficient seniority to enable it to make strategic decisions, give strategic direction and commit resources, or not attended at all. Some YOT Managers were left to do not only their own job but also run the Board.

A number of Management Boards underwent significant organisational changes and restructuring and, indeed, some of the YOTs, where neighbouring local authorities had originally agreed to fund a joint team, had split from each other and formed separate local teams. Without the strategic direction and leadership of senior managers from within the partnership agencies, we found that some YOT Managers were often left unsupported and directionless.

Where Management Boards were appropriately constituted, we saw clear leadership, clarity of roles and responsibilities, good quality agendas and minutes that not only recorded discussions, but also identified issues to be taken forward by individual members.

### Individual Findings:

The YOT Steering Group met immediately after the Cardiff Community Safety Partnership, as a number of representatives attended both, in an attempt to maximise the use of people's time and to ensure regular and consistent attendance. We found the meeting to be focused and productive. Discussion was robust and clear connections were made to other criminal justice fora and plans, including the policing and probation plans and health priorities (*Cardiff YOT 2004*).

The Management Board was reviewed externally in 2005 and its membership was extended to include increased local education authority representation and a strategic housing representative. Terms of reference were reviewed and the format of meetings revised. The YOS Manager had produced guidance for Management Board members that clarified their roles and expectations. A work programme had been agreed that identified the contributions that were needed from partners to ensure that the overall aims of the YOS and the specific objectives of the Youth Justice Plan were met (*Rhondda Cynon Taf YOS 2007*).

The Chief Executive of Gwynedd County Council and Chair of the Management Board had introduced a process for monitoring attendance at Management Board meetings. Attendance reports were prepared for circulation and discussion and, as a result, there had been a big improvement in attendance over the previous 12 months (*Gwynedd & Ynys Môn YJS 2008*).

Overall, we have found that many YOTs had managed to form some excellent strategic partnerships with both their statutory partners and also with other public and voluntary agencies. These partnerships had enhanced the YOTs' abilities to deliver a wide range of services to children and young people who were likely to offend and those who had offended. We were, however, concerned that for some YOTs these partnerships were not always supported by up-to-date protocols and service level agreements. For these YOTs some of the interventions lacked clarity and had not been appropriately targeted.

#### **Individual Finding:**

Some interventions were provided in partnership with other agencies and included: the remand fostering and bail bed scheme with social services, SPLASH programmes in the four communities first areas with the police, substance misuse services with CAIS (Drug and Alcohol Service in Wales) and access to further education, training and work experience through Careers Wales (*Wrexham YOS 2005*).

We found YOT staff and volunteers to be committed, motivated, well managed and willing to share both the areas of practice that they were pleased with and those that were of concern to them. Feedback from staff with regard to how they were managed was very positive. 90% felt that their managers demonstrated professional management approaches and 89% felt that they modelled positive leadership behaviour. With regard to training and development, 84% said it met their needs, 93% said their supervision was either excellent or sufficient and 79% had had an appraisal during the previous twelve months.

#### **Individual Findings:**

The YOS used an annual appraisal process adopted by the local authority for all staff. The personal development review S4 form was available for individual staff with clear guidance for completion. The format was comprehensive and covered a review of the previous year; identified positives as well as areas for development and considered practical training and development needs and opportunities. Staff employed by other agencies received an annual appraisal from the employing agency that included a contribution from the YOS (*Vale of Glamorgan YOS 2008*).

Staff and volunteers received regular supervision and support and 89% scored the quality of supervision as sufficient or excellent. 90% of staff said they felt well informed about policies and procedures and felt that their managers demonstrated professional management approaches, whilst 80% stated that managers modelled positive leadership behaviour. All were pleased with the training and development opportunities available to them (*Monmouthshire & Torfaen YOT 2009*).

YOTs in Wales have evolved over the past five years and some have developed faster and more productively than others. However, those where we were sufficiently concerned to warrant a reinspection have made improvements and we are confident they will continue to do so. It is important that those with strategic responsibility for YOTs in their areas continue to give them the support needed.

### Strengths

- Many YOTs have formed good quality strategic partnerships.
- YOT staff and volunteers are committed, motivated and well managed.

### Areas for improvement

- Some YOTs were poorly managed, resourced and supported by their partners and Management Boards.
- Local Authority Chief Executive Officers were not always proactive in holding statutory partner agencies to account.
- Partnership arrangements were not always underpinned by protocols and service level agreements that supported the provision and delivery of good quality services.

## SERVICE USERS

As the recipients of services from the YOTs we have found that service users, although often grateful for the provision they received, were also balanced in their views. In addition to their work with children and young people, work with, and the involvement of, victims and parents/carers had been an integral part of the YOTs' responsibilities from their inception.

### Children and young people

Throughout the phases we have sought feedback from children and young people and they were mostly positive about their experience of the YOT. Many were just very grateful that someone had taken an interest in them and wanted to help them.

Figures from phase 4 showed that all of the children and young people felt that they had been treated fairly and with respect by YOT staff. 82% felt that YOT staff were really interested in helping them and 91% felt that YOT staff had done their best to ensure that they got the most from the interventions.

In terms of outcomes, ETE had improved for 67% and health for 75% of those who were experiencing problems. Indeed, 87% stated that things had got better for them overall and, as a result, 88% were either 'largely' or 'completely' satisfied with the service they had received from the YOT.

#### Children and young people's views:

*'I have reading problems and since attending the YOT I have been helped with my reading and writing. The YOT worker had proper time for me. They have also helped me to find work.'*

*'I like doing the work with my YOT worker and it stops me getting into trouble. I can talk about my feelings and what I need to do to change my life and go back to my family.'*

*'Being wound up does not help me because that's when I offend, the YOS has helped me to start controlling my anger.'*

*'Got me to listen and do more – given me more confidence to mix with people – I did not like mixing with people that's why I didn't go to school – looking forward to Careers Wales finding me a job.'*

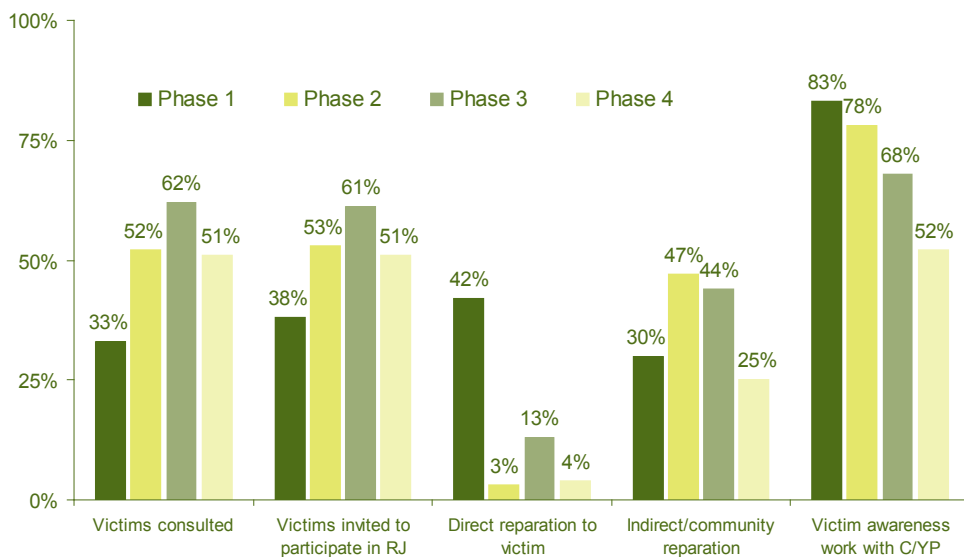
## Strengths

- Children and young people were very positive about the way they were treated and the services they had received from the YOTs.
- There were measurable improvements in children and young people's education, training, employment and health needs.

## Victims

We have found varying degrees of resourcing and commitment to this area of YOT practice throughout the four phases of the inspection process. Some YOTs had clearly struggled with the concept of working with victims, raising children and young people's awareness of the impact of their behaviour on their victims and including the victims' perspectives in PSRs. However, there is evidence that work with victims has been carried out at different levels and in different areas of the YOTs' work and has increased as time has moved on. 70% of victims were consulted or invited to participate in final warnings in phase 1, although none participated. In phase 2 the invitations rose to 80% and 20% participated, rising to 34% in phase 3 and continued to rise in phase 4. With the introduction of referral orders, the need for victim participation had increased and 80% of victims had been invited to attend the youth offender panel meetings in phase 2, of which 50% attended. This had, however, decreased to 62% invited in phase 3 and 11% attendance in phase 4. 25% attended the panel meetings, whilst others participated in victim offender mediation, restorative justice and family group conferences. With regard to other orders, the table below gives an indication of the fluctuating nature of this work.

### Work Undertaken



### Individual Findings:

In 58% of the case sample, victims were invited to participate or contribute to the youth offender panel or to the sentence planning arrangements for the child or young person. Direct reparation took place in 15% of cases where victims became involved, and indirect reparation in 40% of cases, usually taking the form of a letter of apology (*Caerphilly & Blaenau Gwent YOT 2006*).

The restorative justice coordinators were fully trained in victim work and mediation. Victims were contacted either by telephone or letter and offered the opportunity of a visit and/or referral to Victim Support. They were also provided with information leaflets explaining the work of Victim Support and the YOT in relation to restorative justice processes and the types of reparation the child or young person might carry out. These leaflets were available in Welsh and English and victims could opt for a service in their preferred language (*Powys YOT 2006*).

The YOT did not view crimes against commercial shops as 'victimless' and had been proactive in engaging with a number of local businesses. These included Wilkinson's, Asda, Spar, Tesco, Morrison's and Londis. Agreed protocols were in place with most shops in the area in relation to their preferred practices when they were victims of crime. The YOT encouraged children and young people to make face-to-face apologies or to send letters of apology (*Pembrokeshire YOT 2008*).

Community reparation work commenced within the first three months of the order in 89% of the case sample. As part of the YOS programme, children and young people attended victim awareness groups designed and delivered by the victim coordinator, which were funded by the Community Safety Partnership and were available for 40 weeks of the year (*Vale of Glamorgan YOS 2008*).

There was active involvement of victims in youth offender panel meetings, which had enhanced the meetings in terms of helping children and young people to understand the impact of their offending behaviour. Where victims were not able to personally attend the panel meetings, use was made of video and audio recordings, surrogate victims, photographs to evidence damage or injury and victim impact reports (*Monmouthshire & Torfaen YOT 2009*).

The vast majority of victims interviewed were satisfied with the service they had received from the YOT. 94% found the first contact helpful, 91% felt their needs had been taken into consideration and 94% said they had been given the chance to talk about any worries they had about the offence or the child or young person who had committed it. They had also been given the chance to decide how much they wanted to be involved.

#### **Victims' views:**

*'The length of time before a visit could have been quicker, however when I was visited, I felt at ease and was able to discuss all issues with the YOT workers, they were very professional and did all they could to help.'*

*'I was very happy with the service as the young persons came around and did direct reparation by cleaning the windows.'*

*'We would like to hear of a larger overall plan of action. We received no final result about the three females even though we requested it. We think a final meeting or phone call would be a better way forward for the victims of crime. Otherwise the victims of crime always feel there is no end result.'*

*'I just want to thank the YOT for all the help and support to my daughter during her difficult time even though she still does not go outside by herself and has only played outside twice since the incident.'*

## **Strengths**

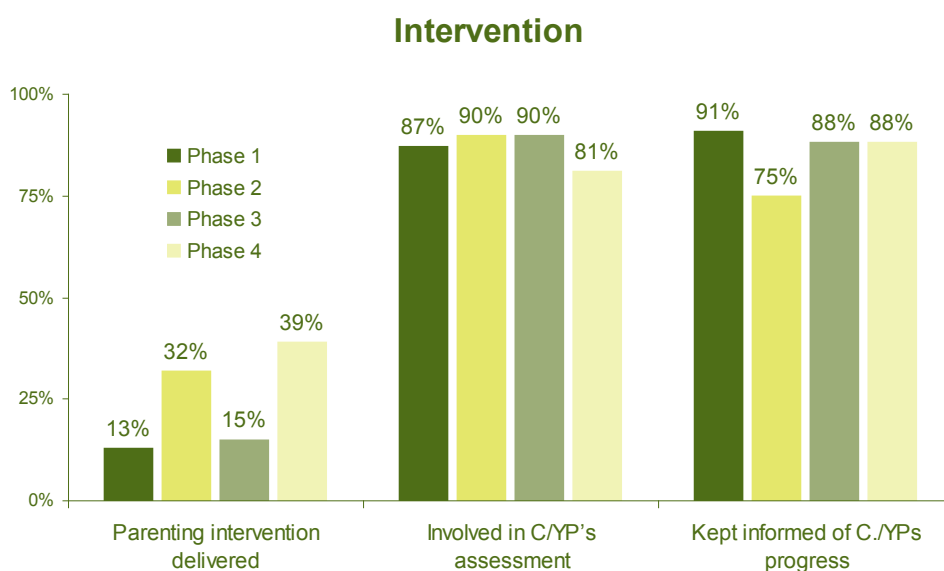
- Victim participation in final warnings had increased throughout the four phases of the inspection programme.
- YOTs had developed varied approaches to their work with victims of youth crime.
- The majority of victims consulted were satisfied with the service they had received from the YOTs.

## **Areas for improvement**

- The high incidence of victim participation in youth offender panel meetings during the early stages of referral orders has not been maintained.
- In phase 4, reparation and work to raise the child or young person's awareness of the impact of their offending behaviour on their victims has decreased on previous years.

## Parents/carers

YOTs have been very committed to working with parents/carers and we have found high levels of consultation and their involvement in all the YOTs' work with children and young people from prevention through to those who had served custodial sentences. Although both individual and groupwork programmes were provided to parents/carers, the number receiving these services were still relatively low, as illustrated in the table below:



In phase 4 we sought feedback from parents/carers and, of the 40 who responded, 78% were either reasonably or completely satisfied with the overall service they had received from the YOTs. However, only 53% had been asked if they needed help with their parenting skills and of these 45% had received help.

### Individual Findings:

Parenting interventions within the YOT had been offered for three years and group work programmes, jointly organised and run by National Children's Homes Cymru had been available for one year. To date, three parenting groups had taken place, catering for some 30 parents/carers. Fifteen had completed the programme and six were attending a group during the inspection period (*Conwy-Denbighshire YOT 2004*).

Services for parents/carers had been identified as a resource deficit for the authority area and were being addressed at a strategic level. It was clear from interviews with staff that they felt the lack of appropriate resources had impacted on their ability to undertake this work successfully. However, most of the work by the YOT was undertaken on a one-to one basis, with no parenting group or course offered (*Merthyr Tydfil YOT 2005*).

The YOS provided a range of parenting support and interventions, and support and advice was given to parents/carers by case managers during home visits. Formal assessments were carried out using the parenting assessment tool developed by the Trust for the Study of Adolescence. Support was offered to parents/carers in many forms: on a one-to-one basis; via a range of group work activities; family residential weekends and school holiday activity support. Parents/carers were, or had been previously, involved in parenting interventions in eight of the 30 cases we examined (*Rhondda Cynon Taf YOS 2007*).

In 23 cases it was identified that the Youth Justice Service should have been working directly with, or otherwise involving, the parent/ carer, and this was the practice in the majority of cases inspected. Staff established good links with parents/carers and assisted them in setting boundaries for their child or young person and liaising with other agencies as appropriate (*Gwynedd & Ynys Môn YJS 2008*).

We found that the YOPS had developed a successful parent mentoring scheme, which trained and encouraged parents/carers who had benefited in the past from parenting interventions to become volunteer mentors. There were six active accredited mentors and five undergoing training (*Carmarthenshire YOPS 2009*).

### Parents'/carers' views:

*'The YOT has given us help with rehousing as we were threatened with eviction due to the offences committed by our son. They're friendly, caring and helpful.'*

*'I do not feel that the YOT made it clear that it is fulfilling a court sentence and it is serious. My daughter viewed the YOT commitments as a bit of a laugh which she chose to participate in or not with minimal effort.'*

*'I have done parenting skills at the YOT and I found it worked well for me.'*

*'There was a lack of resources at the YOT and they were very busy, at times there was a lack of communication. A rocky start but the YOT are great.'*

*'We attended a parenting course and have found it has enabled us to re-establish our relationship with our son, in order to move forward from the negative behaviour that we were all displaying. Unfortunately, my son could not be persuaded to join a course, but is receiving ongoing help from a specialist nurse at the YOT.'*

### Strengths

- YOT staff regularly consulted and involved parents/carers in the work with their children and young people.
- Most of the parents/carers consulted were satisfied with the service that they had received from the YOTs.

### Area for improvement

- Almost half of the parents/carers said they had not been offered help with their parenting skills and less than half had received help.

## FUTURE INSPECTIONS OF YOUTH OFFENDING IN WALES

Although the first programme of YOT inspections in Wales has now ended, the replacement programme of Inspection of Youth Offending will continue much of its work, but in a new format. The two elements of the new programme, Core Case Inspection (CCI) and Thematic Inspections (TI) were introduced on a three-year cycle with effect from April 2009. Welsh YOTs will be inspected together for CCI purposes over a three to four month period at a point to be announced.

Whilst the methodology remains similar to that undertaken in the past, with criteria and assessment of individual cases, the core inspection will focus on two key threads – public protection and *Safeguarding*. The public protection thread will consist of *Risk of Harm to others* and Likelihood of Reoffending. And, although CCI is a leaner inspection, each YOT will still be expected to produce an improvement plan from the recommendations that will be passed on to the Youth Justice Board for monitoring.

It is likely that thematic inspections will always involve at least one Welsh YOT and, in some cases, more. For example, the joint Health Inspectorate Wales, Care Quality Commission and HMI Probation inspection on alcohol misuse and offending is likely to visit up to six Welsh YOTs during the autumn of 2009. Other joint thematic inspections planned for 2009/2010 include prevention and court work & reports.

HMI Probation will also continue to work with the Welsh inspectorates and with other inspectorates working in Wales.

For further information on the work of HM Inspectorate of Probation, please visit our website:

[www.justice.gov.uk/inspectorates/hmi-probation](http://www.justice.gov.uk/inspectorates/hmi-probation)